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ITINERANT PROPHETESSES:

A Feminist Analysis of the Sayings Source Q*

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The following observations are based on minimal Q, that is those overlapping sayings of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke not found in Mark.¹

1. The Androcentric Opposition to Patriarchy in the Sayings Source and its Limits.

By patriarchy I mean a social organization based on the husband's domination over his wife in a patriarchal "house," which includes further dominative relationships, for example over children and slaves. The state in turn is based on an analogous domination by the

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¹For a detailed discussion of the possibilities and limits of reconstructing Q, see Luise Schottroff "Das Gleichnis vom grossen Gastmahl in der Logienquelle," *Evangelische Theologie* 47 (1987) 192-211.

ruling class over the masses. Society's hierarchical structures of domination are likewise repeated in its conception of God.² Throughout the sayings source Q, an androcentric language corresponding to this patriarchal ideology is spoken. Women are never acknowledged as independently operative outside of the home—the Queen of the South (Q 11:31³) being the exception that proves the rule. They are the **objects** of men's transactions in marriage (Q 16:18, 17:27) and in divorce (Q 16:18). Women are only acknowledged as operative within the domestic realm in their chores (by milling in Q 17:35; by baking in Q 13:20f.). The conflict in the patriarchal household brought about by Jesus' message is acknowledged only in the conflict between a son's duties towards his father (Q 9:59-60). Matthew's androcentric version of Q 12:51-53 therefore likely preserves Q. Luke's more egalitarian version **also** presupposes a patriarchal household, in which the young bride moves in with the groom's parents. Matthew's "person" (*ἀνθρώπου*) is the young man in the patriarchal household of his father. Female companions of Jesus or encounters with women on the road—described in the other Synoptic sources—are sought for in vain in the sayings source. Except for the household, the world of the sayings source is—seemingly—strictly a society of males. Yet the relegation of women to the household should not be understood as their confinement to the "private" realm. The household was at that time also in some sense "public." Their confinement was based on the patriarchal ideology, according to which women were defined by matrimony.

The sayings source criticizes the reality of patriarchal domination in a radical way, but exclusively from the perspective of men, who oppose any domination as contrary to the divine will. I would like to illustrate

²On the concept of patriarchy, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: 1985) and Luise Schottroff "Die Selbstdarstellung des Patriarchats zur Zeit der Entstehung des Christentums: Cicero, *De republica*," *Reader der Projektbeiträge zur Sommeruniversität 1988 in Kassel*, 36-48.

³The Lukan versification is used for Q according to the current scholarly convention, without prejudicing either the order or reading in favor of Luke.

an example of this androcentric opposition to patriarchy in some detail. An eschatological logion of the sayings source reads as follows:⁴

As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For just as (*in those days before the flood*) they were eating and drinking, marrying and being married,⁵ up to the day when Noah went into the ark and (*they did not notice until*) the flood came and destroyed them all (Q 17:26-27).

The periphrastic imperfect tense⁶ in Matthew's version as well as the imperfect tenses in Luke's version emphasize the usual pursuit of daily life and the habitual behavior of Noah's generation. They continue on as always. But their behavior is seen as culpable and obstinate in God's eyes, which leads to their eschatological destruction, to eternal death. Numerous exegetes have claimed that this logion finds Noah's generation innocent: "Their activities are in no way evil in and of themselves" (D. Zeller⁷); "the regularity of daily life is surprisingly and unexpectedly confronted by God's judgement" (W. Schenk⁸). But this logion does not portray a confrontation between inapprehensive certainty on the part of those engaged in "instinctual busyness" (S. Schulz⁹) with God's judgement. Rather, it portrays a confrontation between those who heard God's voice but **chose not to listen**. The form of this logion (some kind of monitory saying), the Jewish traditions pondering the guilt of Noah's generation,¹⁰ and its context in the sayings source (see Q 13:34 in the Matthean order: "... and you refused!") demonstrate that the issue lies not in the inapprehensive attitude of Noah's generation, but in the culpable persistence of living on as before. The offence of Noah's generation is essentially described as the persistence of an intact patriarchal household: "... eating and drinking, marrying and being married," ("were being married" in

⁴The Lukan and Matthean overlap is sufficient for an understanding of the saying. The text cited represents the Matthean version, with those portions of the Matthean text without a Lukan parallel in parentheses.

⁵Matthew's version ("marrying and being married") has in mind the groom and the bride's father; Luke's version ("they married, they were being married") the groom and the bride. In both cases, women are the objects of men's transactions.

⁶"they were eating ..."

⁷Dieter Zeller *Kommentar zur Logienquelle* (Stuttgart: 1984) 91.

⁸Wolfgang Schenk *Synopse zur Redenquelle der Evangelien* (Düsseldorf: 1981) 122.

⁹Siegfried Schulz *Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zürich: 1972), 285.

¹⁰Collected in H. Strack and P. Billerbeck *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch I* (München: 1922) 961-964.

Luke) constitute unassailable pillars of daily life. The patriarchal household is described from an androcentric perspective: in Luke as arranged by the *paterfamilias*, the master of the household, and in Matthew as arranged by the father and the son. Women are the objects of men's transactions and their work is invisible. Women produce the "eating and drinking," but they are not mentioned. This rigid arrangement ought to have been shattered by Jesus' message, had it been heard. His message should have induced disputes and conflicts, as other Q logia show (Q 12:51-53; 14:25-27; 17:33; 9:58-60). The persistent, stubborn endurance of the patriarchal household is held in defiance by the community through their imminent expectation of judgement—but this defiance lacks a conscious interest in the emancipation of women. Indeed the patriarchal house is not demurred as an oppressive place, rather its privileged men are chided for their disinclination to hear Jesus' words.

The saying's source's androcentric opposition to patriarchy gets at the root of men's patriarchal behavior, nevertheless, it disregards the situation of women: they are implicated in the text, without having been operative for themselves, for they too are subjected to the judgement on Noah's generation. Elsewhere in the sayings source, a similar androcentric opposition to patriarchy critiques the worldly political domination of Rome,¹¹ the hierarchical structures of military authority,¹² the luxury of Herod's palaces,¹³ and the reliance upon kinship with Abraham.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this opposition to patriarchy falls short of a critique of the patriarchal structures imposed on both God and the lives of the women followers of Jesus: believers are **sons** of God (Q 6:35); Jesus is the **Son** of God (Q 4:3); believers are compared

¹¹Q 4:5.

¹²Q 7:8. The faith of the Capernaum Centurion does not consist in his understanding of Jesus' authority over demons as analogous to his authority over his soldiers. Rather it consists in his realization that his own realm of authority is limited to killing, while Jesus' realm of authority extends to healing. The military command and the healing words of Jesus are essentially incomparable. On the history of interpretation see Uwe Wenger *Der Hauptmann von Kapernaum* WUNT 2. Reihe Bd. 14 (Tübingen: 1985), who in his own exegesis stresses the difference in the magnitude of authority between the Centurion and Jesus, but who neglects any qualitative difference between military authority and the authority to heal.

¹³Q 7:25.

¹⁴Q 3:8.

to a man building a house upon a rock (Q 6:48). The sayings source's androcentric descriptions as well as its limited opposition to patriarchy are taken into consideration in the following attempt to say something about the history of the women in the Jesus moment recorded in Q.

2. A Woman's Labor and its Theological Implications

The sayings source juxtaposes the parable of the leaven (Q 13:20-21), a parable about a woman, with the parable of the mustard seed. The sowing of mustard seeds, a man's chore (only in Q¹⁵), is juxtaposed with the baking of bread, a woman's chore. Similarly, the description of the woman's chore of grinding at the millstone is juxtaposed with a man's chore in Q 17:34-5.¹⁶ Again in Q 12:27 ("toil nor spin"), a woman's household chore is coupled with a man's chore as an equitable pair. An acknowledgement of women's labor is unusual in patriarchal societies. Normally, a woman's labor is not even considered "labor" in the sense that a man's is—as a rule it is not even mentioned. Even the sayings source—with a certain inconsistency—reflects the patriarchal concealment (as in Q 17:27's "eating and drinking") and even the expropriation of women's labor: in Q 11:11-12 the *paterfamilias'* mealtime role is equated with God's role (which God surpasses)—he gives the son bread (or an egg) and a fish. The distribution of bread, of the food, by the *paterfamilias* is a clear symbolic expropriation of the woman's household chores. Women grind at the millstone, bake the bread, prepare the fish, yet the *paterfamilias* hands the food to the son, he is the actual donor. The sayings source embraces both a conspicuously equitable perception of women's household chores, as well as an unconscious patriarchal concealment and expropriation of women's labor. It should also be noted that the sayings source does not acknowledge women's labor outside of the household (in trade, in textile production, in the fields, in prostitution), since according to patriarchal ideology, women exist only in the household.

¹⁵The "person" (ἄνθρωπος) who in Q 13:19 sows the mustard seed is (unlike in Mark 4:31) a man, as the following saying about the woman and the leaven makes clear.

¹⁶The similarities between Matt 24:40 and Luke 17:34 are insufficient to accurately ascertain the activities of the two men. Because of Q's interest in the theme of labor, one could argue that Matt = Q.

The parable of the leaven, the saying about the women who grind at the millstone, and the admonition not to worry, all place women's labor alongside men's labor with theological implications. The **parable of the leaven** most obviously shatters the laws of patriarchal perceptions of women's labor, since it equates a woman's labor with God's activities. The parable tells of a particular situation during the baking of leaven bread: the woman takes the leaven (mixes it with flour) and covers the dough,¹⁷ so that it can rise. She can then patiently await the permeation of the dough by the leaven. The baking of bread by women was common to all societies of antiquity, as it still is in the so-called "third world;" it is the daily labor which sustains all people. For people in a famine stricken land, as the sayings source presupposes ("give us today bread" Q 11:3), a glimpse at a full vat of dough,¹⁸ which would only have been possible in well-off households, would have been a sign of the promised kingdom of God. Jesus' parables tend to equate items of everyday life with the kingdom of God.¹⁹ This particular parable directs attention to the hands of a woman, who **takes** the leaven and **covers** the dough and then waits with clasped hands. Her hands are compared to God's hands, in them the hungry see a sign

¹⁷Most exegetes have viewed the woman's "hiding" of the leaven as an inaccurate description how dough is prepared. Walter Bauer's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (III 958) adds "to mix in" as a translation in addition to "conceal." Other authors solve this alleged problem by assuming that the parable is speaking of the concealment of the kingdom. Even the geographically and technologically oriented exegetes fail to appeal to the covering of dough in order to let it rise (Gustav Dalman *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* IV (Gütersloh: 1935) 46; Samuel Krauss *Talmudische Archäologie* I (Leipzig: 1910) 99f; Hugo Blümner *Technologie und Terminologie der Gewerbe und Künste bei Griechen und Römern* I (Leipzig: 1912) 61). The distance of men, who work in the humanities and sciences, from the procedure of baking bread, is apparent here. The procedure is accurately described in cook books, such as Helene Caspari and Elisabeth Kleemann *Das Landkochbuch* 2nd. ed (Berlin: 1918). Joachim Jeremias *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Göttingen: 1965) 147, and Adolf Jülicher *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* II (Tübingen: 1910) 578, correctly describe the procedure, presumably from their own observation.

¹⁸The above mentioned cook book presupposes 30 kg of flour for the baking of bread in a large rural household. Leaven bread was baked for storage, so that the amount of flour mentioned in the parable (3 measures = 39.4 liters) need not be seen as a "divine reality" (so J. Jeremias *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* 146 note 16).

¹⁹See Luise Schottroff in Christine Schaumberger and Luise Schottroff *Schuld und Macht. Studien zu einer feministischen Befreiungstheologie* (1988: München) 137-140.

from God. God too intervened,²⁰ and now awaits with tranquil certainty the transformation of all creation into the kingdom of God. The parable speaks of that moment of comprehensive hope, in which the Jesus movement is recognized as the mustard seed which will become a tree. The time to cover the dough is now. God and God's children look to the future with the patient hope of a woman baking bread.

In Q 17:35 the strenuous labor of two women grinding at a millstone is portrayed as a typical situation of daily life,²¹ which is interrupted by God's judgement as they are separated: one woman is taken, the other is left . . . one will thus live, the other will die an eternal death. Judgement will separate those who did God's will, who listened to God, from those who did not listen. This saying harries its audience: "Is it me or is it my neighbor?" "Am I alert, did I listen to the voice of God?" There are a series of logia, which portray the confrontation of God's judgement and the activities of daily life. They each emphasize a different aspect: an **obstinate perpetuity** in Q 17:27 (see above), and the **separation of two**, who had been only inches apart, in this logion.²² It is difficult to decide what Q's parallel to the women who were grinding at the mill was: Was it two men, who were still in bed while the women were working (Luke), or was it two men, who were working in the fields (Matthew)? In any case, the aim of this logion is to harry its audience—in this case men—with the thought of imminent judgement. In Q 17:35 women are addressed in their daily toil:

²⁰The concern of theologians of the "first" world to speak of a human co-laboring in the kingdom of God ("synergism") has led to the bifurcation of God's activity and human activity in following Jesus. God's intervention in this text is tied to the work and person of Jesus as well as that of his followers. The feminist interpretation of Elizabeth Waller ("The Parable of the Leaven: A Sectarian Teaching and the Inclusion of Women," *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review* 35 (1979-80) 99-109) de-emphasizes the theme of women's labor and the significance of leaven and bread for people, and places the theme of the conception of God in the foreground: "A woman is the locus of sacred activity." Sharon H. Ringe appropriately emphasizes the connection between the significance of women's labor and of bread in a famine stricken land ("Matthäus 13:33: Das Brot geht auf," *Feministisch gelesen* I ed. Eva Renate Schmidt, Meike Korenhof, and Renate Jost (Stuttgart: 1988) 159).

²¹See especially G. Dalman *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* III (1933) 219f.

²²Mark 13:15 par and Mark 13:16 par deal with the admonition, to be ready immediately. Mark 13:17 par deals with the perils of those who are pregnant and nursing.

Judgement is near, it will fall upon you too, if you do not listen. Here women are accorded their own decision and their own behavior in following Jesus (as opposed to the previous logion).

In the admonition to avoid enslavement by earthly anxieties (Q 12:22-32), the labor of men and women is likened to imprisonment. The anxiety over food and clothing, as well as the strenuous labor of men and women, ensnares people and renders them incapable of seeking the kingdom of God (Q 12:31). In this instance people are admonished, in spite of their poverty, to avoid being crushed by their poverty.²³ Here too, women are addressed in the midst of their daily toil—they are credited with the ability to liberate themselves from the enslavement of anxieties.

Despite the androcentrism of the sayings source, despite its inconsistency in the perception of women's labor, in these texts the lives of women are acknowledged, and they are given the same opportunities as men to follow Jesus—in the parable of the leaven their labor is even compared to God's labor for the creation. The inconsistency with regard to the emancipation of women is not unique to the sayings source, it is also encountered in Paul and the other Synoptic traditions. Nevertheless, with due caution, I would like to point out a particularly striking difference: Q's androcentrism is particularly pronounced,²⁴ rendering its equitable perception of women's labor unique²⁵ in the early Christian traditions or in the social reality of its time.

²³Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (New York: 1986) 42ff.

²⁴When, for example, marriage is portrayed as the exclusive activity of men (see note 5).

²⁵On contempt of women's labor, see Luise Schottroff "DienerInnen der Heiligen. Der Diakonat der Frauen im Neuen Testament," in G. K. Schäfer and Th. Strohm *Diakonie—Biblische Grundlagen und Orientierungen* (Heidelberg: 1990). I see the reasons for the beginnings of the justification of women—in spite of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's critique (*In Memory of Her* 140ff) as the experience of equity in a famine stricken society and in the hope of God's rule, and not as a conscious espousal of the liberation of women in the Jesus tradition.

3. Family Conflicts of Women

The followers of Jesus spread a message that created conflict in the patriarchal household, the evidence of which crops up in a variety of logia: in the enmity between the members of a household, who continued to live together (Q 12:51-53), and in the abandonment of family, and the imitation of Jesus' homeless lifestyle (Q 9:58; the mission speech according to Q;²⁶ perhaps also Q 14:26). It should already be clear from the analysis of Q 17:27 that the notion of itinerant prophets, who were economically dependant on a sedentary and patriarchally structured community, is inapplicable.²⁷ In this model itinerant charismatics are discarded as moral freaks, while the early Christian community is adopted as the model for a patriarchal Church and society.²⁸ The sayings source and other early Christian sources paint a different picture: the message of Jesus questions effectively—in the resultant conflicts—and structurally—even though androcentrically—the patriarchal order. Men who plod along as if nothing had happened (Q 17:27), are deaf to the voice of God. And Jesus demands: "Let the dead bury the dead" (Q 9:60), this undermines one of the foundational pillars of the inter-generational contract, based on the Decalogue's commandment to honor one's parents.²⁹ There were then, except for the itinerant followers of Jesus, no "normal" family structures, nor was there a "love-patriarchy" as an organizational principle in the community.³⁰ This raises the question of the impact of the actual and fundamental break down of the patriarchal household on women. According to Q 12:53 it meant that the young women of the household (daughters and daughters-in-law) rebelled against their mothers (so Matthew); in the Lukan version it also meant the rebellion of the old against the young. According to Q

²⁶See Luise Schottroff in L. Schottroff and W. Stegemann *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* 45ff.

²⁷So Gerd Theissen *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* (Tübingen: 1979), especially in his 1973 essay on "Wanderradikalismus."

²⁸For a criticism of Theissen's model, see Luise Schottroff in L. Schottroff and W. Stegemann *Jesus von Nazareth* 66f; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her* 145f.

²⁹See especially Martin Hengel *Nachfolge und Charisma* (Berlin: 1968) 9ff.

³⁰I Timothy and Titus are particularly interested in reestablishing the patriarchal arrangements instead of the existing non-patriarchal community structures.

16:18 the Gospel often led to divorce,³¹ after which the woman was not permitted to remarry, but was to remain single. It is thus clear that women too could be counted among the itinerant messengers of Jesus, who lived according to Jesus' homeless lifestyle.³² With this, however, the women's assigned roles in the patriarchal structure were made obsolete. Texts like the so-called "household codes," which force women into specific roles of the patriarchal structure, are absent from the sayings source and the entire Synoptic tradition. Even though the sayings source's androcentric language conceals the presence of women among the messengers of Jesus (especially in the mission speech Q 10:2-12), they are nevertheless to be counted among those who considered their labor to be for the kingdom of God, and not for the patriarchal household: there were women laborers for God's harvest (Q 10:2). Whether sedentary or itinerant, they lived as messengers of God in a new community. Traces of this community are present in the portrayal of solidarity among the male and female disciples, who lived together as sheep among wolves (Q 10:3).

4. The Gospel of the Poor and Divine Sophia

At the suggestion of the so-called "history-of-religions" school (R. Reitzenstein, W. Bousett³³), Rudolf Bultmann³⁴ tried to reconstruct a

³¹See Luise Schottroff "Ehe—Familie—Gemeinde," *Reader der Sommeruniversität Kassel* 1989. Based on the logia on divorce in the Synoptic tradition, it is inappropriate to speak of Jesus forbidding divorce. Divorce is presupposed, and the logia's interest is to hinder remarriage. 1 Cor 7 can be read as a commentary on the Gospels' logia on divorce.

³²At this point I agree with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her* 145f) as well as with her critique of Theissen's scheme. Monika Fander (*Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium* (Altenberge: 1989)), adopts Theissen's theories without addressing the arguments of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, and imagines that the wives of the radically itinerant men stayed at home (329f). She also notes that it is difficult to prove the existence of radically itinerant women. But Mark 15:40f is unequivocal. Even aside from the sayings source, it is clear that women are to be counted among the itinerant prophets.

³³See R. Bultmann "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium" (1923), *Exegetica. Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: 1967) 10-35, especially 26f.

³⁴R. Bultmann "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium" and *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: 1958) 120.

Sophia myth, whose traces he detected not only in the Jewish wisdom literature, but also in the sayings source. Over the past sixty years his method of reconstructing a myth based on common motifs has been called into question by various scholars:³⁵ with this method myths can be reconstructed that did not exist. In the process, the sources in which traces of the alleged myth are posited are not examined in their own right. Rudolf Bultmann's suggestion was pursued, among others, by James Robinson.³⁶ He noticed in the sayings source both texts in which Jesus is a messenger of Sophia (such as Q 7:35), and texts that understand Jesus to be Sophia (Q 10:22, Matt 11:28-30). According to Robinson, sapiential traditions and sapiential motifs tend to develop in a Christological direction, without necessarily emanating from a "wisdom myth." This hypothesis was accepted by other exegetes who built on the work of R. Bultmann, as for example S. Schulz.³⁷

This thesis has gained widespread acceptance among those engaged in the feminist theological quest for an egalitarian spirituality. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza³⁸ sees in Jesus as divine Sophia and in the later Jesus-Sophia-Christology of the New Testament (especially in the pre-Pauline hymns) a concept of God, a praxis, and a Christology, which liberates women both spiritually and practically. Those texts of the Jewish wisdom literature oppressive to women are, according to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in tension with their own portrayal of Sophia, and they are imperiled by it.³⁹ Unlike Rosemary Ruether,⁴⁰ she

³⁵Carsten Colpe *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythos* (Göttingen: 1961); Luise Schottroff *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt. Studien zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium* (Neukirchen: 1970). See also Willy Schottroff's review of W. Fauth's *Aphrodite Paraklyptusa* in ZDPV 83 (1967) 206-208.

³⁶James Robinson "ΑΟΓΟΙ ΣΟΦΩΝ. Zur Gattung der Spruchquelle Q," *Zeit und Geschichte. Dankesgabe an R. Bultmann* ed. Erich Dinkler (Tübingen: 1964) 77-96; "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels," *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* ed. Tobert L. Wilken (Notre Dame: 1975) 1-16.

³⁷S. Schulz Q. *Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* 213-228, who nevertheless recognizes the non sapiential thought of Matt 11:25 par, see below note 49.

³⁸Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her* 208-218. See also her "Wisdom Mythology and the Christological Hymns of the New Testament," *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* 17-41.

³⁹Elisabeth Fiorenza Schüssler *In Memory of Her* 133-34.

does not think of Sophia, the mediator of revelation, as a feminine supplement to God, a male notion of femininity in heaven. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza believes that the struggle against a "divine dimorphism"⁴¹ in the Jewish wisdom literature made possible the notion of divine Sophia. In addition to James Robinson's work, Felix Christ's 1970 book *Jesus Sophia*⁴² is also foundational for Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. She adopts from Felix Christ the notion that divine Sophia was already connected with the gospel of the poor in the Jewish wisdom literature. She speaks of a "divine Sophia of the poor." Though I applaud her presentation of the Synoptic traditions as a gospel of the poor, I can not agree that it understood **divine Sophia** as partial towards the poor.

F. Christ did not succeed in finding texts in the wisdom literature that demonstrated the sapiential character of the sayings source's gospel of the poor.⁴³ The idea that wisdom turned to fools and infants in order to make them wise, or the idea that wisdom did not reveal herself to the powerful and renowned,⁴⁴ is not what Matt 11:25 has in mind: "thou hast **hidden** these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants." The infants or the uneducated are not transformed into sages by wisdom, but rather they become, as it were, children of God. This is a resumption of the prophetic tradition (like Isaiah 29:14-20, for example), which was also decisive for Paul in I Cor

⁴⁰Rosemary R. Ruether *Sexism God Talk* (Boston: 1983), especially 61: "... that simply ratify on the divine level the patriarchal split of the masculine and the feminine."

⁴¹*In Memory of Her* 134.

⁴²Felix Christ *Jesus Sophia. Die Sophia-Christologie bei den Synoptikern* (Zürich: 1970). See *In Memory of Her* 132 note 76 and the connection between speculations of Sophia and the Gospel of the poor.

⁴³Note, for example, his lists of sapiential motifs (158-163) with the alleged sapiential examples of "associating with tax collectors and sinners."

⁴⁴Wisdom of Solomon 10:21 (and elsewhere): "Wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb and made the tongues of infants speak clearly"—that is to say the dumb and the infants are made wise by wisdom. See Sirach 3:19 or Baruch 3 for the idea, that there were powerful and renowned who did not receive a revelation from wisdom (see also Marcion's version of Matt 11:25 (in Adolf von Harnack *Marcion* (1924) (Darmstadt: 1960) 205f: "I thank you and I praise you ..., because that which was hidden from the wise and the prudent, you revealed to infants.") For a discussion of Matt 11:25's parallels, see G. Bertram *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* IV 921-22 and F. Christ *Jesus Sophia* 83ff.

1:27-28. God chooses the lowly and brings to naught the wisdom of the wise; the community translated the election of the lowly into practical behavior. Without trying to play wisdom and prophecy off each other, it is noteworthy that in the writings that we call sapiential (Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Proverbs, and others), the gospel of the poor plays no role. Rather, the concern is for the wise and pious man (sic!), and for how the *paterfamilias* might attain a prosperous patriarchal household. The wisdom literature provides instructions for grooming a sage endowed with all the proper traits of a patriarchal *paterfamilias*, or even a king (Wisdom of Solomon). A reading of the wisdom literature critical of patriarchy is still pending.

It is striking that some of the constituent motifs of wisdom as the mediator of revelation crop up in the sayings source—and elsewhere in the New Testament. Wisdom is involved as the sender of prophetic messengers in Q 11:49. However I do not assume that sapiential motifs are present in Matt 11:28-30 (nor in Q 10:22⁴⁵). Matt 11:28-30 criticizes dominative forms,⁴⁶ and can hardly be considered sapiential. Yet where sapiential motifs do occur, it is necessary to consider the associations of these motifs in a methodologically sound manner: the meaning of the adopted motif must be understood in its new context. The sayings source subjugates the relatively few sapiential fragments under the rubric of its gospel of the poor. Those texts mentioning the rejection of Jesus' messengers are spiritually heir to the prophetic tradition, not the sapiential tradition. The messengers of Jesus were killed by those who rejected them. Sophia withdrew to heaven after she was rejected.⁴⁷

⁴⁵On the apocalyptic background of Q 10:22 see Paul Hoffmann *Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle* (Münster: 1972) 122-138.

⁴⁶See Luise Schottroff "Das geschundene Volk und die Arbeit in der Ernte Gottes," *Mitarbeiter der Schöpfung* ed. L. Schottroff (München: 1983) 161f. Sirach 6:18-31; 51:26 (which F. Christ (*Jesus Sophia* 108 note 9) suggests as a parallel to Matt 11:28-30) speaks of the yoke of wisdom in the struggle for learning. The yoke of those "who labor and are heavy laden" is imposed by unjust domination, which Jesus the gentle king will replace with an easy yoke.

⁴⁷*I Enoch* 42. Further material on this motif is cited in F. Christ *Jesus Sophia* 162 note 40. On the prophetic tradition of texts like Q 11:49-51, see Jer 5:3; 6:10; 7:13; on the unwillingness in Q 13:34 see O. H. Steck *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten* (Neukirchen: 1967). He believes that Prov 1:20ff; Baruch 3:9ff, texts that report the rejection of wisdom, have been influenced by the Deuteronomistic tradition of

All in all, I consider the sapiential motifs of the sayings source, and indeed the entire Synoptic tradition, to be marginal and essentially irrelevant in the Jesus traditions: their meaning is derived from other traditions (prophecy and apocalyptic) and from other experiences.

Another exegetical tradition appropriately states that Q 10:21 and other such passages contain no sapiential motifs, but then inappropriately interprets the text in an anti-Jewish manner: Jesus sarcastically refutes the Jewish claim to be wise by offering revelation to infants.⁴⁸

In their 1986 book titled *Sophia*,⁴⁹ Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig base their interpretation of the Synoptic tradition⁵⁰ on Felix Christ as well. As a whole they are more cautious in their appropriation of the Sophia traditions for a feminist spirituality. They see in the sapiential traditions a starting point, from which a feminist spirituality could be developed (14). Yet their work—despite F. Christ and especially despite Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's influence—neglects the gospel of the poor in the Synoptic tradition; they therefore operated with a limited perspective on the Jesus traditions. The gospel of the poor must remain central for any feminist spirituality, as they themselves tentatively suggest (91: "experience of marginality").

The infants, to whom God is revealed (Q 10:21-22), include both women and men, though one expects more women to be *νήπιοι*—"infants," in this case "the uneducated." The text states that God is

the rejection of the prophets (233 and note 7, compare with F. Christ *Jesus Sophia* 139 note 40 and 144 "Weisheitstradition"). Decisive for any explication of a motif's meaning (in this case the rejection of God or Sophia) is its application within its context. The rejection of wisdom does not mean that wisdom is killed. But in the prophetic tradition the historical experiences of Israel killing its own prophets was central (Neh 9:26). Q 11:49-51 and 13:34-35 point to both Jesus and his messengers: they too were prophets who had been killed.

⁴⁸Walter Grundmann *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: 1961) on Luke 10:21f. S. Schulz Q. *Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* 219; R. Schnackenburg *Matthäusevangelium* 1 (Würzburg: 1985) on Matt 11:25.

⁴⁹Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig *Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality* (New York: 1986).

⁵⁰Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig *Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality* 47f.

revealed to those who, according to the wise, have no access to wisdom (and no claim to revelation). Q 10:21 indicates why Jesus' good news to the poor is also good news to women. I believe herein, and not so much in the presence of Sophia in the Synoptic traditions, lies the starting point for a feminist spirituality. God's election of infants, the poor, and children opens the eyes of the androcentric Jesus movement to the fate of women, and admonishes women to act with the self confidence of a daughter of God. By overcoming the androcentrism of the Synoptic tradition, our eyes can be opened to a justice that excludes no one, that leaves no victims invisible, and that works towards the emancipation of women. My criticism of a feminist Sophia theology or Sophia Christology is rooted in historical and theological reasons. The historical reason is my assessment of the sapiential tradition, which is **not** as a whole oriented towards the goal of a comprehensive justice. The theological reason is the significance of the interrelationship of the Gospel of the poor and justice for women and women's emancipation.

Conclusion

Despite the androcentric perspective of the sayings source Q, it nevertheless radically criticizes the persistent state of affairs of the patriarchal household (Q 17:27). A woman's labor in the house is considered equivalent to a man's labor (Q 13:20-21; Q 12:26-27; Q 17:35), and is even compared to God's labor (Q 13:20-21). In the sayings source women are addressed as capable of making their own decisions, and are deemed responsible for their own behavior (Q 17:35; Q 12:22-31). Despite the androcentrism of the sayings source, one can conclude from those passages dealing with women's family conflicts that itinerant prophetesses did exist. In the sayings source, as in the rest of the Synoptic tradition, a Jesus movement is presupposed in which women were independently operative—whether sedentary or itinerant. Fundamental to the history of women in the Jesus movement was the gospel of the poor, which is also central in the sayings source (Q 10:21). While a critical reading of the texts of the sayings source points to the existence of itinerant prophetesses who followed Jesus, it is apparent that the sayings source's androcentric perspective also obscured the extent of the emancipation of women. The sayings source—as the entire Synoptic tradition—points to a Jesus movement that questioned the hierarchies of the patriarchal

household, thereby questioning the entire structure of the patriarchal household. Therefore, the fact that women too left their houses to become itinerant prophetesses is of utmost significance for those who still live—usually in conflict—at home. Both women and men who live as itinerant messengers, as well as those who live in villages, in the same way live a gospel of the poor that destroys and subverts the patriarchal structures.

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